



December 11, 2006

## USAID Monthly Newsletter

### Regional

#### **USAID Helps to Raise Health Promotion Issues in Prisons**

Prison staff in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will be trained on two health promotion courses developed by the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction Program. The 12 and 10 hour courses on "Health Promotion in Prisons" were officially endorsed by the Ministries of Justice of Kyrgyzstan in July 2006 and Tajikistan in May 2006. The courses are included in the regular short-term Penal System educational curricula. The courses include basic information on drug demand reduction, infectious diseases, and health promotion. This information will improve the skills of prison staff in delivering quality drug demand reduction and drug treatment services in prison settings. A similar course is currently being developed in Uzbekistan. This component of the Drug Demand Reduction Program is implemented by the AIDS Foundation East West.



Signing the order on institutionalization of the "Health Promotion in Prisons" education course in Kyrgyzstan.  
Photo: DDRP

#### **Central Asia Experts Discuss Guidelines for Avian Influenza Surveillance at the Regional Conference organized with the U.S. Government Support**

More than 150 specialists from the Ministries of Health and Agriculture from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attended the "Central Asia Regional Conference on Practical Aspects of Avian Influenza Surveillance," held in Almaty from December 4-6, 2006. The conference was organized by USAID, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Winrock International to help regional specialists develop guidelines for avian influenza surveillance, as well as for detection, investigation, and containment of outbreaks in poultry and humans. The guidelines will fill existing gaps in pandemic preparedness plans and enable Central Asia countries to respond promptly and adequately to dangerous diseases like avian influenza. Following the conference, CDC and Winrock International, with funding from USAID, will assist the governments of the countries of Central Asia in adopting and implementing guidelines developed during the conference.



Avian flu can be transferred to humans through infected domestic fowl.  
Photo: DDRP

#### **Representatives of Central Asian Customs Agencies Discuss Improvements in Customs Procedures**

From December 7-8, 2006, USAID organized a seminar for Central Asia's customs officials to present the results and recommendations of a USAID-funded assessment on the local customs compliance with international standards.



Customs officials discussed ways to align their procedures with international standards.  
Photo: Trade and Investment Facilitation Project



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Participants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan also heard presentations from donor organizations involved in customs and trade reform activities in the region about their completed, current, and planned projects. Together with donors, regional customs specialists identified priority areas for future donor assistance that will further improve customs operations and address administrative and procedural weaknesses. The workshop was held in the framework of the regional customs services improvement initiative, announced by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her visit to Central Asia in October 2005. The initiative, implemented by USAID's Regional Competitiveness Initiative Project, aims to reduce border transaction costs, promote a more transparent and predictable commercial environment, and encourage greater cooperation among international donors, governments, and the private sector.

## **USAID Project Marks the World AIDS Day in the Region**

During the month of November, the USAID-funded Central Asian Program for AIDS Control Interventions Targeting Youth (CAPACITY) Project conducted a number of events to mark the World AIDS Day in the region. Events included a round table with Almaty City AIDS Center in Kazakhstan, a Working Group meeting with the National AIDS Unit under the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan, and a Partners Forum held jointly with the Government of Tajikistan and international organizations. CAPACITY developed and printed an educational flier that was distributed at street-based education sessions and at events conducted by the Youth Power Centers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Many of the events were organized with local and international partners. CAPACITY supported an HIV education session at the Art and Music Festival, an anti-stigma and discrimination presentation at the Kazakh National Medical University, and a youth concert at the Kazakh National State University Student Palace for more than 3,000 young people. A wide range of activities for World AIDS Day in Uzbekistan were supported jointly by international organizations and projects including CAPACITY. The slogan of this year's World AIDS Day was "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise" and its theme "Accountability" aimed to enhance accountability from political leaders on their promises on AIDS and generate a greater public awareness of, and engagement with, the problem of AIDS worldwide.



More than 3,000 youth attended a USAID-sponsored World AIDS Day concert in Almaty.  
Photo: CAPACITY

## **Three More Groups of Central Asia's Specialists Return from Study Tours in the U.S., Organized by USAID's Community Connections Program**

In November, groups of Tajik and Kyrgyz specialists returned from their three-week study tours to the U.S. The tours enabled region's specialists to learn from their American colleagues and to discuss common professional challenges, while expanding their cultural and social understanding. The first of the three tours was organized for Tajik textbook developers and included textbook authors, designers, publishers, and curriculum developers. It was designed to support the education reform and the implementation of the \$18.4 million grant from the Fast Track Initiative that the Tajik Government received for 2006 and 2007.

The second tour, for Tajik agricultural specialists from the Sugd Province, aimed to increase fruit and vegetable processing capacity in the province. Even though it accounts for a majority of domestic consumption in the



Tajik textbook developers discussed their plans to apply the knowledge received during the tour.  
Photo: Community Connections





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country, fruit and vegetable processing in the Sugd Province is still at a basic level. Participants gained experience in improving quality and safety, reducing losses from crop spoilage, and creating new opportunities for economic growth.

The Kyrgyz group tour aimed to introduce those involved in religious affairs to secularism in the American context. Leaders of different faiths, Religious Studies scholars, employees of madrasas and kazyats, and representatives from the State Agency on Religious Affairs had an opportunity to learn how religion and the state interact and what mechanisms are used to protect religious rights in the U.S.

## Kazakhstan

### USAID's Reproductive Health Pilots to Contraceptive Donation

Next year, USAID's reproductive health improvement pilots in Almaty, Astana, Zhezkazgan, and Karaganda will receive over \$800,000 worth of oral contraceptives from the biopharmaceutical company Organon. This donation will support USAID's ZdravPlus family planning and reproductive health activities, aimed at reducing the number of induced abortions and unwanted pregnancies in the country. All USAID pilot sites will be able to provide oral contraceptives at no charge to all women who had undergone abortion for three months, and for all post-partum women who agree to take pills for at least six months. USAID's project will provide training on family planning counseling to staff of these sites. This initiative will benefit an estimated 25,000 women.



The donation was announced at a joint USAID and Organon press conference.  
Photo: USAID

In Kazakhstan, abortion rates remain high, especially amongst post-partum and post-abortion women. While contraceptives are available in the country, access is often limited by high cost or lack of information. To help reduce the use of abortions as a family planning method, USAID's project trains doctors and midwives from both maternity hospitals and outpatient facilities in family planning methods and counseling skills. ZdravPlus is implemented by Abt Associates, Inc.

### Regional Agriculture Trade Show a Big Hit

USAID's Water Users Associations Assistance Program (WUAAP), in partnership with SodBi Business Incubator and the Southern Kazakhstan Regional Government, held an agricultural trade show in the regional capital – Shymkent. To help organize the fair, WUAAP provided a \$5,000 grant, which was leveraged by \$15,000 in participant fees and government financing. A reported 50 contracts between growers and purchasers were signed during or immediately after the event.

The trade show was coupled with an annual regional harvest festival and drew an estimated 1,500 participants from 14 districts throughout the region. Participants included 400 farmer organizations, 200 entrepreneurs, 10 agricultural finance organizations, 15 business consulting organizations and 70 government officials. The growers displayed their products



Aside from the weather, trade fair in Shymkent was a success.  
Photo: WUAAP



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outside while the processors, credit agencies, consulting companies, etc. displayed inside. Both the Akim (head of the City Council) and Deputy Akim for Agriculture attended the event. In the afternoon, Sodbi conducted business workshops for our farmers. WUAAP is implemented by Counterpart International.

## USAID Helps Kazakhstan's Farmers Diversify Crops and Increase Profit

In 2006, farmers who receive support from USAID's Water Users Associations Assistance Program (WUAAP), achieved more than three times higher increase in productivity than other farmers. While agriculture productivity in Kazakhstan increased 8% in 2006, average productivity gains of farmers participating in the WUAAP program was 26%. Moreover, farmers that received training and technical assistance from WUAAP increased their harvest in alfalfa, corn, rice, melons, gourds and grains. Following technical and business trainings, two participating WUAs decided to increase their alfalfa planting area by 250 hectares. When the price of alfalfa went up, farmers not only replenished their soil, but also earned a sizable profit.

WUAAP provides organizational, technical and business trainings to 20 water users associations in Kazakhstan. By capitalizing on the technical and democratic potential of water users associations, the program aims to increase farmer agricultural productivity. USAID's Water Users Associations Assistance Program (WUAAP) has been operating in Kazakhstan since November 2004. The program is implemented by Counterpart International.



WUAAP specialists discuss the advantages of various crops during the field demonstration.  
Photo: Counterpart

## Kyrgyzstan

### USAID Grantee to Address Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Crossing Challenges

In November 2006 Public Association *Ferghana Valley Lawyers without Borders* started the implementation of the Peaceful Borders Project, funded by USAID through the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia. This one year project aims to reduce border crossing problems for Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and foreign citizens, to improve the skills of customs and border guards, and to build cooperative relations between the staff of the Kyrgyz Republic Border Services and communities around borders. The project will open an information resource center, where the Kyrgyz Border Services staff will have access to legal information systems and other professional literature. Border Services staff working at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border admission posts will receive training. The project will establish two legal clinics near the Kyrgyz-Uzbek admission posts to provide access to information on the rules of border-crossing, legal protection, and residence on the territory of Kyrgyzstan for foreign citizens.



The new project will seek to reduce border crossing challenges at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border.  
Photo: Trade and Investment Facilitation Project



## Tajikistan

### A USAID-supported Program Engages Media to Promote Drug Reduction Messages

On November 30, 2006, an awards ceremony was held for the winners of the competition “The World without Narcotics”. The competition was conducted under the auspices of the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP) in partnership with Internews Tajikistan. The competition promoted development and active involvement of mass media in Tajikistan and increased professional skills of journalists from radio and TV institutions in covering issues of drug abuse and information about living a healthy life. In their works, TV journalists touched upon related problems such as migration and spread of HIV in a modern Tajik society. The entries were aired on TV and radio from January 1 to August 1, 2006.

Seven works were submitted under the category “TV Reporting”, three works under the category “TV Program”, and 19 works under the category “Radio Public Service Announcement”.



Cultural workers, as well as representatives from government, international organizations, and NGOs attended the award ceremony for the competition.  
Photo: DDRP

### USAID-supported Junior Achievement Program Awards its Best Teachers

On November 18, more than 50 teachers from different regions of Sugd Province and local government representatives participated in an award ceremony for the Junior Achievement’s Best Teacher of the Year competition. Contestants were evaluated on their teaching experience and on essays about the secrets of their success. A jury awarded winners in three categories: best teacher or trainer, best organization of a school company, and the most creative teacher. The ceremony provided an opportunity for teachers to share their experiences on teaching Junior Achievement economics, student projects to create enterprises, and other programs at their schools.



The USAID-supported program recognized teachers for excellence in teaching, initiative, and creativity.  
Photo: Junior Achievement